

# First Glimpses of America

## ARRIVAL AT BALTIMORE

That there was great rejoicing when the colonists first saw the shores of America, can be readily understood. The ocean voyage in the sail ships of that period lasted from seven to eight weeks, and most of the comforts and conveniences of present day travel were non-existent.

Baltimore, an important seaport city, was a decided disappointment to the colonists, who were shocked at the muddy and almost impassable streets, in which chickens, hogs and cattle roamed at will. This was a great and unpleasant contrast to the graveled country roads, and the clean, orderly and well-kept highways which characterized the towns and cities of their native land.

Early in June, 1847, the Hollanders commenced their journey from Baltimore into the American interior, finishing the first stage by rail as far as Columbia, Pennsylvania, a town which lay at the junction of two railroads and a canal. At Columbia the immigrants were packed "like herrings" into canal boats and conveyed nearly two hundred miles up the beautiful valleys of the Susquehanna and Juniata rivers with their great wooded ridges and picturesque scenery to Hollidaysburg at the foot of the Alleghany mountains. From there they had the unique experience of being "portaged" up the mountain slope; they were placed in cars, drawn up a series of inclined planes by stationary locomotives, and passing through a tunnel near the mountain top, they were let down inclined planes on the western slope to Johnstown, a distance of nearly forty miles. Thence they continued down the Conemaugh valleys for over one hundred miles to Pittsburg.

Having arrived at Pittsburg from beyond the Alleghanies, the Hollanders continued westward by a route equally historic, the Ohio river, which in those days was the principal means of communication between the east and the Mississippi valley. Steamboat traffic on the river was then just at the beginning of its greatest prosperity. Through this so-called "Gateway to the West" the Hollanders reached the Mississippi river, which they ascended as far as St. Louis, having covered one thousand miles by steamboat.

Three weeks were consumed in this journey overland to St. Louis. Although the newcomers saw much wonderful scenery and marveled at young America's gigantic strides, they found American methods of travel very unpleasant and fatiguing. Mothers with large families of children were driven almost frantic. Indeed, the hearts of all the immigrants were constantly filled with anxiety. Nearly three months of ceaseless motion on their journey from their homes in Holland to the American interior had severely tried their patience, and enough had happened to extinguish the last spark of poetry.

The immigrants were glad to stop for a breathing spell at St. Louis, for they deemed it best to wait until a site should be found for their colony. All received a glad welcome from the small band of countrymen who had already passed several months in St. Louis. For so many people not enough dwellings were to be found at once; accordingly, wooden sheds were hastily constructed to accommodate them. Then early in July, 1847, in a "booming" frontier city of thirty thousand people, they set about to look for work.